

The Heatons, unlucky farmers

The majority of farmers were self-employed and therefore had to be good, hardworking folk to make their living. As a result, most kept out of the headlines and the Heatons were no exception, aside from some terrible luck. **William Heaton** was born at Gills farm, near Slaidburn, a son of **Henry Heaton** and his wife **Ellen Brown**. In 1852 William married local lass, **Betty Turner**, and had seven children, still at Gills farm. During the 1880s they retired from farming to live at Pendle View in Long Preston near their daughters. This family was ridiculously unlucky.

William and Betty's youngest son, **Matthew Heaton**, died when he was just 14 in 1886 and was the first of the family to be buried in Long Preston graveyard, joined later by William and Betty.

In Loving Memory of Mathew the beloved son of William and Betty Heaton of Long Preston, born July 12, 1872, died Nov 9 1886. Also the above William Heaton died April 1, 1901, aged 63 years, and of Betty his wife died March 7 1908 aged 74 years 'Thy will be done'



In 1881 William and Betty's eldest son, **Henry Heaton**, married **Sarah Ann Clark**, also from the Gisburn Forest area and they had a son and daughter. Henry took over The Gills farm from his father and grandfather. Tragically, Henry was killed in 1894, aged 35, while helping to cut down an old tree which had blown over in a recent gale [1]. His widow Sarah Ann moved to Long Preston to be near the Heatons but she died in 1902, aged 42. Miraculously, the children survived and had successful lives, with the help of aunts and uncles.

FATAL ACCIDENT TO A FARMER.
Mr Henry Heaton The Gills, Fossile, near Long Preston, met his death yesterday afternoon under very sad and peculiar circumstances. During the recent gale a high tree was blown down the side of a hill upon the deceased's farm, tearing up along with the roots a great many yards of earth. Mr Heaton was assisting in cutting away the trunk when it suddenly snapped, and the supported portion falling forward, crushed him to death and entombed him with the earth. The unfortunate gentleman, who was widely-known and respected, was 35 years of age, and leaves a widow and two children.

Three of the Heaton family married into Long Preston's **Preston family** who were successful butchers and cattle dealers [ph4]. William and Betty's daughter, **Elizabeth Heaton**, became the first wife of **Thomas Preston** but died, aged 26, at the birth of her second daughter, **Elizabeth Heaton Preston** who also died soon afterwards. Five years later Thomas Preston married Elizabeth's sister, **Jane Heaton**, despite the fact that it was illegal to marry your dead wife's sister until 1907. Five years later Jane also died at the birth of a daughter, **Marion Preston**, who also died. The sisters and their infant daughters were buried together. Thomas married again and had two further children. He was buried with his third wife. We'll find out more about the Prestons later.

1907
Mr H. Heaton
T. & N. PRESTON,
Butchers and Cattle Dealers,
LONG PRESTON,
Lancashire.
Probes, Traps, always on hand.

| | | |
|------|----------------|---------|
| 1906 | Wm. Heaton | 5 26 |
| 1907 | Jane Heaton | 3 7 |
| | Marion Preston | 8 9 1/2 |

Jan 21 1907
J. Bolton

In Affectionate Remembrance of Elizabeth wife of Thomas Preston, born March 20 1861, died March 6 1887. Also of Elizabeth Heaton daughter of the above born Feb 20 1887 died Dec 30 1887. Also Jane second wife of the above born Oct 23 1864 died Feb 8 1898. Also Marion her daughter born Jan 30 1897 died April 13 1897.



Meanwhile William and Betty's son **William James Heaton** married **Rose Beatrice Preston** and they had much better luck. They farmed from Pendle View and had at least five children all of

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whom survived infancy and childhood. They also brought up nephew **Henry Heaton**, son of brother Henry Heaton. Outside of farming William James was a governor of the Knowles Hospital (the Long Preston Almshouses) and an overseer of the poor. Their headstone has since disappeared.

In Loving Memory of William James Heaton born Nov 19th 1869, died Nov 1st 1938. Rose Beatrice his beloved wife, died 13th December 1961, aged 90 years.

In the ten years leading up to 1905, the remaining daughters Ellen and Sarah Heaton had lost their father, two sisters and a brother, and their mother died three years later. What twists of fate had befallen these sisters? Sarah Heaton had married **Thomas Bleazard**, a farming neighbour in Gisburn, in 1879 and they had a son, **John Heaton Bleazard**, a year later. Tragically both Thomas and their son died in 1882 so may have had a shared fatal disease. Sarah moved up to Long Preston and lived with her parents at Pendle View. She stayed there until she died in 1928, aged 71.

At the time of the 1871 census, in Gisburn, the Heatons had a farm servant living with them called **John Hitchen/Hitchin**. Eldest daughter **Ellen Heaton** was living next door with uncle and aunt **John** and **Elizabeth Heaton**. Talk about doing things properly! In March 1874 Ellen married John Hitchen and six months later the eldest of three sons was born. Eldest son **Robert Hitchen** had a successful career as a farmer and then auctioneer living near Clitheroe. When he was 24, Robert married **Mabel Annie Fryer**, the illegitimate daughter of a grocer, **Ellen Fryer**. They had three daughters. In 1905 Mabel Annie had her photo taken at the Horner studios [ph1] with her cousin **Betsy (Fryer) Fryers**, daughter of Ellen's brother **James Fryer** by his first wife. James Fryer's second wife was

Mary Jane Horner, a first cousin of **Anthony Horner** the photographer at the studios.



Mrs Fryers and Mrs Hitchen,
photograph by the Horner Studio.
Horner Collection©NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

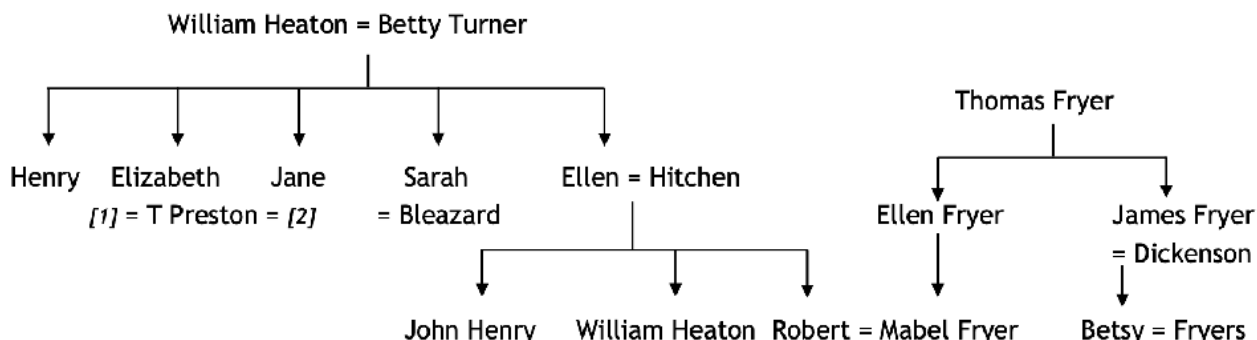
Meanwhile William and Ellen's second son, **William Heaton Hitchin** became a bank manager in Barnoldswick and married **Gertrude Wright**, the daughter of a silk manufacturer. William and Ellen's youngest son **John Henry Hitchin** was not so lucky [ph2]. He had an eventful and fatal war. John Henry started work as a banker's clerk at the Settle branch of the Liverpool Bank and was one of the first to



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sign up with Tunstall's men. His conduct was so good that he was rapidly promoted to Lieutenant of Princess Louise's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

Heaton Family



So far so good. However, on 12 May 1916 a headline 'Former Settle Bank Clerk's Alleged Forgery' appeared in the Craven Herald newspaper. 'At Tower Bridge on Saturday, John Henry Hitchin, 26, of Long Preston, was charged on remand with forging and issuing cheques at the Waterloo Hotel, York Road, Lambeth, and obtaining board and lodging by false pretences.' John Henry had been staying at the hotel, in his Lieutenant uniform and borrowed money against cheques which he had forged. His own account was overdrawn. John Henry's defence solicitor suggested he was a victim of his own success. Since his promotion he mixed with people of a higher class and extravagant habits and had felt pressured 'to lead a fast life'. A few days after leaving the hotel he collapsed and had an operation for appendicitis. He survived but was then was then remanded in custody for a few weeks because of the fraud. But he was needed back on the front.

In contrast, in August 1917 John Henry was awarded the Military Medal after he was severely wounded from a shell explosion whilst acting as a messenger for his superior officer, near Arras. He was almost buried but managed to run back with his message. However, John Henry's luck ran out as he was killed, along with 609 others when *HMT Aragon* was torpedoed off the coast of Egypt on 30 December 1917. He was 27. The ship [ph3] had originally been a Royal Mail Ship but was converted to become a troop ship. She was taking 2,200 troops to

Egypt to reinforce the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in the Palestine campaign against the Ottoman Empire. His life is also commemorated on the war memorial at Edinburgh Castle.



In Memory of Ellen, the beloved wife of John Hitchin, Prospect House, Long Preston, died 29th November 1932 aged 79. Also of the above John Hitchin died 29th July 1936 aged 86. John Henry son of John and Ellen Hitchin drowned at sea 30th Dec. 1917 aged 27 Argyll and Sutherland Regt. F/161



The Preston family had its own eventful life. As we know, **Robert Preston** was a well-respected butcher and cattle dealer with his wife **Nancy Redmayne**. Robert's sisters, **Rose Martha Preston** and **Ellen Preston** became the first and second wife of Settle's famous Wesleyan preacher **John Lord**. Marrying a deceased wife's sister was quite a trend in this family! Rose Martha died, aged 46

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after giving birth to seven children which sister Ellen helped to raise. Robert Preston was well known along the Eden Valley, regularly trading at the Appleby and Lazonby fairs and was often invited to judge cattle competitions at agricultural shows across Yorkshire and Lancashire. The railways made life much easier for cattle dealers and Robert would certainly have had a season ticket if they had existed. In 1885, Robert brought some 'fat cattle' south from Carlisle with his friend **Christopher Harrison**. As a train was passing south through Horton-in-Ribblesdale, a number of wagons left the line. One animal died in the crash and four more had to be slaughtered, Robert and Christopher were in the guard's van with the guard and they received 'a very severe shaking, Mr Harrison's face also being injured'. In addition, 'a quantity of lace curtains and wearing apparel was scattered upon the permanent way'[2].

Robert died six years later, aged 60, still working with his cattle. Despite having been ill for a few weeks, Robert and his son Thomas had travelled to cattle markets in Perth, Scotland to Manchester the following day and then to Leeds. He was taken ill while standing in one of the pens at the cattle market and retired to the Cattle Market Hotel where he died soon afterwards [2]. 'He was well known and much respected by all with whom he was connected. First as a butcher and afterwards as a cattle dealer on an extensive scale he had been a remarkably successful man'[3]. When Robert died he had been living at Ribble Terrace in Long Preston recently built by son-in-law **Charles Francis Duckett**. Robert and Nancy have one of the largest memorials in Long Preston graveyard and left a substantial estate.

slaughtered forthwith. Messrs C. Harrison, of Giggleswick, and **Robert Preston** of Longpreston, to whom the cattle belonged, were at the time in the guard's van, and they and the guard received a very severe shaking, Mr Harrison's face also being injured. The sides of one of the cattle trucks had been entirely carried away, whilst several others were almost entirely demolished, and a quantity of lace curtains and wearing apparel was scattered upon the permanent way, which, as might have been expected, was considerably damaged. Traffic was delayed for some time.

SUDDEN DEATH IN LEEDS CATTLE MARKET.

At 10.20 this morning, Robert Preston, aged 60, a farmer and cattle dealer, of Long Preston, died sud-

denly. Mr. Preston was with him at the time. Mr Preston was a native of Longpreston, where his father still lives; he was well known and much respected by all with whom he was connected. First as a butcher and afterwards as a cattle dealer, on an extensive scale, he had been a remarkably successful man. Deceased



In Loving Memory of Robert Preston of Long Preston who died May 20th 1891 aged 59 years and of Nancy his wife who died May 19th 1911 aged 74 years "Be ye also ready"

Robert and Nancy's son **Robert Preston (Jnr)**, another cattle dealer, operated from Lazonby and died in a similar manner, aged just 38, at the Viaduct Hotel in Carlisle. Three of Robert and Nancy's children married into other local, respected families, apart from the Heaton's. Eldest daughter **Ann Preston** married **Charles Francis Duckett**, who had built Ribble Terrace. The Ducketts' incredible story is told separately. Second daughter, **Nancy Preston** married **Robert Wilson**, a farmer whose mother was **Ellen Duckett**, related to Charles Francis Duckett. Third daughter, **Elizabeth (Betsy) Preston** married **William Morphet** of Wigglesworth Hall, the secretary of Hellifield auction mart.

We know Robert and Nancy's son Thomas Preston married two of the Heaton sisters. Thomas and Elizabeth Heaton's only surviving daughter was **Ethel Gertrude Preston** and she married **William Ingham (Jnr)**, the salesman at Langcliffe cotton mills. William Ingham (Jnr) had a brother, **Henry Ingham**, who served at the Craven Bank in Settle before becoming the manager of the branch in Otley. Unfortunately, Henry succumbed to blood poisoning five weeks after a fall from his bike, aged 36. How unlucky can you be? Henry was replaced as bank manager by Robert and Nancy's youngest son, **Herbert William Preston**.

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The only fly in the ointment for the successful Preston family came with Robert and Nancy's son **Richard Preston**. In 1895 he was taken to court by **Henrietta Welsh** 'under the Bastardy Act'. Allegedly Richard had fathered a daughter, **Barbara Welsh**. Presumably no proof could be found and the case was withdrawn by Henrietta's legal representative [3]. Barbara was brought up by her Welsh grandparents in Long Preston and was last found as a student in a convent school in Sussex. In 1902, Richard, aged 38, married **Sarah Elizabeth Nichols**, a butcher's daughter, but she died in 1907 at the birth of a daughter **Doris Preston**, who also died. Richard married again and had another daughter.

CASE DISMISSED.—Richard Preston, of Longpreston, was summoned by Henrietta Welsh, of the same place, under the Bastardy Act. Mr Robinson, of Settle and Skipton, appeared for the complaint, and Mr Weekes, of Clitheroe, for defendant.—The solicitor for the plaintiff withdrew the case.—Mr Weekes, on behalf of



This account has been compiled by Sarah Lister as part of the Settle Graveyard Project which has recorded gravestone inscriptions, updated church records and researched the lives of those buried. It has been written in good faith with no offence intended. If I have inadvertently included errors or breached any copyright I apologise and would welcome corrections.

The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project and can be found on [dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle graveyard project](http://dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle-graveyard-project). The 'Old Settle' family tree on Ancestry.co.uk includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on settleresearch@gmail.com. Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.

Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Bradford Daily Telegraph, 2 – Yorkshire Post, 3 – Craven Herald & Wensleydale Standard

ph1 – Image 2022.1.68.37 from the Horner Photographic Studio Collection provided courtesy of the Museum of North Craven Life



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ph2 – photo credited to Craven's Part in the Great War, ph3 – credited to Wikipedia, ph4 – with thanks to John Reid

Some of the material in this account has been published by YDMT in the book 'Meandering down the Ribble, Born and Bred in the Long Preston Floodplain' who have given permission for it to be included in this account